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ACCELERATING COOPERATIVE RIPARIAN RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT

AN INTERAGENCY STRATEGY



USDA, Forest Service



USDI, Bureau of Land Management

In Partnership With

Natural Resource Conservation Service



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PREPARED BY
THE NATIONAL RIPARIAN SERVICE TEAM

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ACCELERATING COOPERATIVE RIPARIAN RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT

Riparian areas and wetlands are some of the most diverse and productive portions of the land base. Benefits produced from these areas are essential, and invoke in us a sense of responsibility to ensure their health and continued ability to provide necessary and desired values. Often they are among the first landscape features to show impact from management activities and reflect overall watershed condition. More and more, people are coming together through recognition of the importance of watershed function for long-term water supplies and maintenance of water quality. Our environmental and economic well-being is dependent on the sustainability of these systems, and as the demands on our natural resources increase, we are compelled to restore and protect them.

The following strategy was born of a growing awareness and concern about the condition of these areas. There is general agreement that much more can be done to return these areas to their former productivity and that the only effective way is through strong, lasting, public and private partnerships. The enclosed document outlines one approach the USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, are employing to achieve collaborative stewardship of these resources. It is intended to compliment and blend with ongoing efforts. Incorporated are specific ways to increase understanding and foster agreement as we work with people on the land. Included is a framework for community based training designed to build relationships and enhance conservation education. It offers increased opportunities for integrating knowledge and sharing expertise. We are committed to keeping water on the land as a foundation of our shared conservation legacy. We encourage and welcome your participation.

The National Riparian Service Team

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MISSION STATEMENT

HEALTHY STREAMS THROUGH BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

INTRODUCTION

All life is dependant on water. All terrestrial or land based life including humans and wildlife, and fresh water aquatic species, rely on water from lakes and streams; yet available fresh water comprises less than 1% of the total water contained on earth. One of nature's answers to ensuring a life-sustaining supply of water is the storage of water in riparian-wetland areas.

The precious nature of our water resource has led to an increasing awareness by the people of the United States of the importance of restoring and maintaining the health of the land, and in particular riparian-wetland areas. While we all might not articulate our goal as "restoring riparian-wetland areas", we all recognize the importance of clean water. Properly functioning riparian-wetland areas are the foundation to an increase in the availability of clean water and healthy green margins along lakes and streams.

In order to focus efforts on this major issue that has such a profound influence on communities across the United States, the Agency heads of the USDI Bureau of Land Management and the USDA Forest Service signed a letter on March 20, 1996 agreeing (Appendix A) to aggressively implement a cooperative management strategy to accelerate the restoration and improved management of riparian-wetland areas in the western United States. The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service is a principal partner in this strategy. This letter clearly identified the approach to restoration as one of collaboration:

"[Restoration] will not happen by regulation, changes in the law, more money, or any of the normal bureaucratic approaches. It will only occur through the integration of ecological, economic, and social factors, and participation of affected interests."

Because riparian-wetland areas often pass through or are shared by numerous landowners, a collaborative approach applied at the ground level, in a watershed context, is the only avenue to successful restoration and future management.

STRATEGY

Program Elements

Two program elements (see figure 1) were defined in the March 20, 1996 letter to implement the goals for accelerating cooperative riparian¹ restoration and management. The first element includes the National Riparian Service Team (NRST) and state training cadres² for each of the eleven western states. The second element is an extended riparian coordination network that includes representatives from government, university, industry, conservation, and community organizations, and individuals; working together to restore and maintain functioning riparian-wetland areas.

The NRST is an interagency team that is service oriented and emphasizes collaboration to accomplish riparian-wetland restoration objectives. The Team serves as a catalyst for this effort. The NRST is focused on providing training, consulting and advisory services, and program review and evaluation. The vast majority of work will be done through the extended network of associates within and outside government (see figure 2). Within government, this work is assisted by a network of riparian program coordinators throughout each agency, and by state training cadres. The roles and responsibilities of the NRST, the cadres, and the network, including researchers and the Washington Office/National Headquarters, are described under "Roles and Responsibilities".

Goals

ACHIEVING RIPARIAN RESTORATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

Riparian areas are the areas where land and water meet along stream and lake margins. Wetlands are areas such as swamps or marshes that remain saturated most of the year. Riparian and wetland areas make up a small percentage of total land area but are essential for maintaining water quality and quantity, for ground water recharge, and for dissipating stream energy. Riparian-wetland areas also provide tremendous community benefits in the form of wildlife, grazing, recreation, fisheries and other beneficial uses. Riparian areas, and their associated streams and wetlands, are also indicators of watershed health, as they are among the first landscape features to reflect damage from improper management or natural events within the watershed.

¹ In certain instances throughout this document reference is made only to riparian areas, and not riparian-wetland areas (e.g., the program to accelerate cooperative "riparian" restoration). This is a convenience and, in fact, both riparian and wetland areas are included.

² Current members include representatives from state and Federal agencies, industry, and conservation.

Figure 1: Program Elements Within Agency Structure

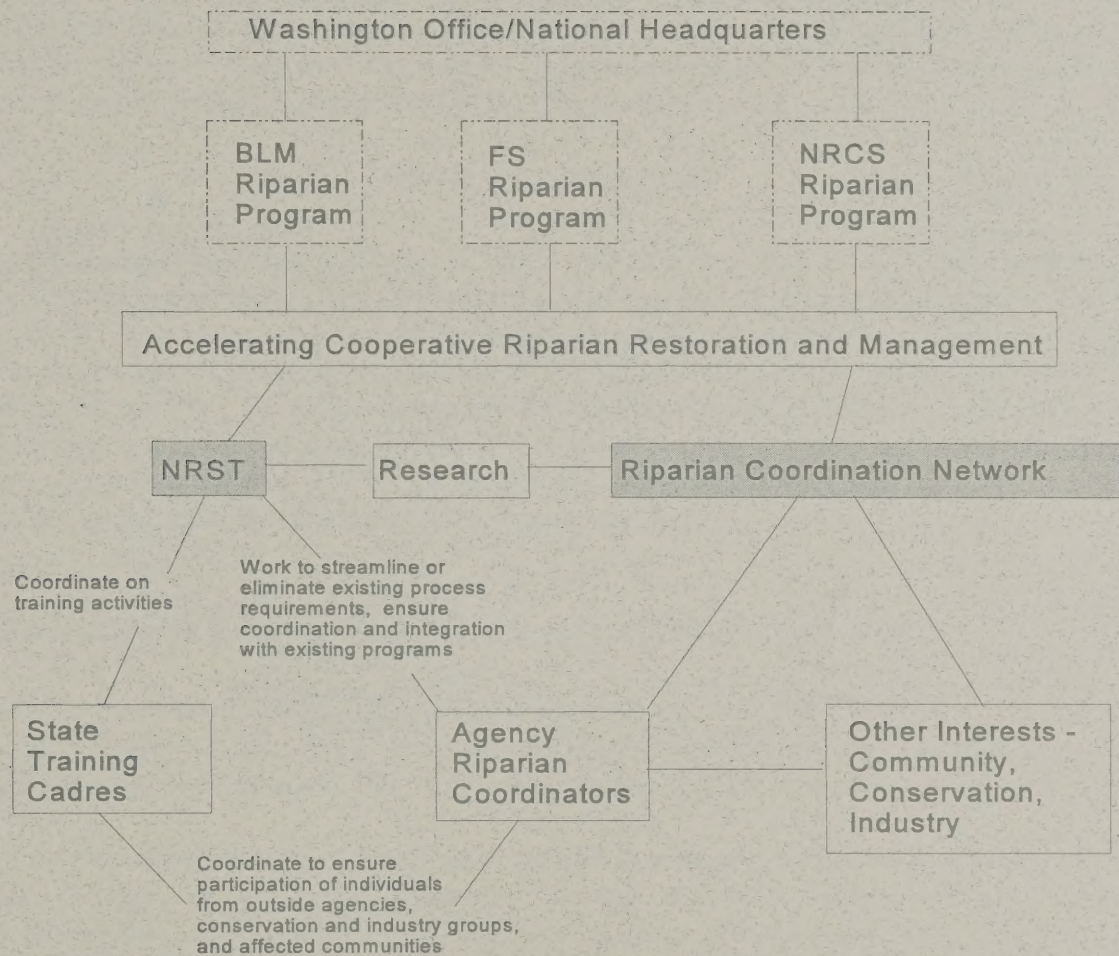
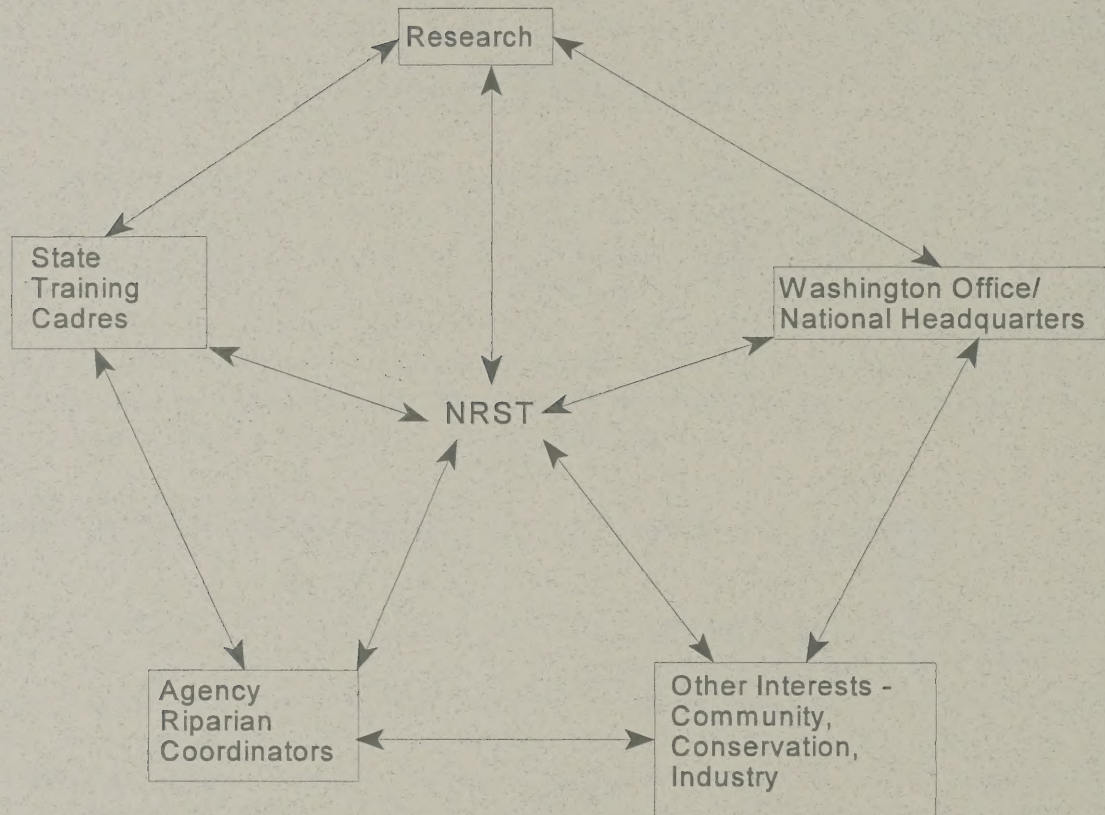


Figure 2: NRST and the Riparian Coordination Network



There is growing agreement among people in the United States as to the value and desirability of healthy streams and lakes and the need to accelerate restoration of degraded areas. Considerable disagreement exists among people however, about the existing conditions of riparian-wetland areas, about the types of uses that are appropriate, and about the treatments and tools that can be successfully employed to restore or maintain healthy riparian-wetland areas. Strongly held values and interests create polarity among user groups and interested people which is a major barrier to achieving healthy systems.

The ability to accomplish the program of accelerating cooperative riparian and wetland restoration is dependent upon being able to bring communities of people together using a common vocabulary and definitions for evaluating the health and condition of riparian-wetland areas. Management and problem resolution is most effective at the ground level, employing a system which allows people to reach agreement about the specific physical functions of riparian-wetland systems. Resulting management decisions must engage the people most affected by success or failure.

REDUCING PROCESS

Given the many laws, regulations, and policies which exist to protect and enhance riparian-wetland areas, efforts at restoration and maintenance of health are often lost in process requirements. *Red tape* is a problem which is frequently cited as a barrier to effective, efficient restoration. To facilitate the goal of accelerating restoration, this program is intended to demonstrate ways of complying with pertinent laws in a more efficient manner. Working collaboratively with the scope of interested parties offers one of the greatest opportunities for reducing process. There are also many technical and procedural changes which may also enhance efficiency. The NRST and the riparian coordination network will be working to encourage and implement these changes, where appropriate.

The Foundation Tool - Proper Functioning Condition

PFC is a methodology for assessing the physical functioning of riparian and wetland areas. The term PFC is used to describe both the **assessment** process, and a defined, on-the-ground **condition** of a riparian-wetland area. In either case, PFC defines a minimum or starting point.

The “PFC” **assessment** provides a consistent approach for assessing the physical functioning of riparian-wetland areas through consideration of hydrology, vegetation, and soil/landform attributes. The PFC assessment synthesizes information that is foundational to determining the overall health of a riparian-wetland area.

The on-the-ground **condition** termed “PFC” refers to how well the physical processes are functioning. PFC is a state of resiliency that will allow a riparian-wetland system to hold together during a 25 to 30 year flow event, sustaining that system’s ability to produce values related to both physical and biological attributes over time.

The proper functioning condition (PFC) assessment was developed in cooperation with many

individuals, interest groups, and state and federal agencies³. It provides the common language and communication tool that invites participation from the widest group of affected interests, both inside and outside government to help “fix the creeks.” PFC is a qualitative approach supported by quantitative science.

Use of this assessment is a critical first step requiring people to put aside “values” and focus on the physical function of riparian-wetland areas. A properly functioning system is a resilient system, able to provide and sustain a variety of values (e.g., livestock forage, wildlife habitat). A system that is not functioning properly is almost always vulnerable to a 25 to 30 year event and decisions are only relevant until that event occurs. The decision space about values *begins* with a system at properly functioning condition and from there a number of desirable outcomes are possible.

The PFC process also describes a logical planning sequence to achieve desired restoration objectives. Additional steps include analysis of cause and effect where condition is less than proper functioning, management actions to achieve and maintain a state of proper functioning condition and to move forward towards achieving desired future condition, monitoring of the actions, and evaluation of results as feedback to further management actions.

Roles and Responsibilities of the National Riparian Service Team

Acts as a catalyst to:

Encourage Relationships

Build Trust

Create a Common Vision

The March 20, 1996 letter outlined a more specific role for the NRST than for other elements of the riparian network, in three major strategic areas:

1. Training and information sharing,
2. Consulting and advisory services, and
3. Review and evaluation services.

The following sections describe the roles and responsibilities of the NRST in each of these strategic areas.

³PFC as used in this document is as defined in the USDI, Bureau of Land Management, Technical References 1737-9 and 1737-11.

TRAINING AND INFORMATION SHARING

Develop effective interagency training programs, information products, and a communication network to facilitate riparian-wetland restoration and management across all ownerships and jurisdictions.

- ✧ Provide interdisciplinary training session on PFC assessment, management applications, and riparian-wetland restoration. Ensure training is accessible to Federal, State, and local agencies; tribes, conservation and industry interests, and affected communities.
- ✧ Provide briefings on PFC assessment and riparian-wetland restoration, as appropriate
- ✧ Establish, coordinate activities and provide support to state training cadres, to ensure consistency and quality in PFC training, including the development and distribution of training materials.
- ✧ Work with managers and specialists in identifying and prioritizing the development and/or revision of technical references needed to facilitate on the ground riparian-wetland restoration and management.
- ✧ Develop networks for communicating about riparian-wetland assessments, applications, management strategies, and successes.
- ✧ Provide reference to sources of information on riparian-wetland literature.
- ✧ Develop effective communications products.
- ✧ Articulate and share how the PFC assessment can improve efficiencies of existing processes, restoration, and maintenance.
- ✧ Sponsor NRST internships to enhance skills development.
- ✧ Facilitate development and application of common assessment and monitoring tools.
- ✧ Develop strategies to increase interdisciplinary applications of PFC.
- ✧ Build personal and team expertise in riparian-wetland assessment, management and restoration.

CONSULTING AND ADVISORY SERVICES

Provide *strategic* consulting and/or advisory services on riparian-wetland management at the request of FS, BLM, and NRCS national, regional, and state offices.

- ✧ Assist in resolving controversial riparian-wetland management issues with priority on those issues that are interagency in scope, or involve large-scale projects or watersheds.
- ✧ Provide feedback to agency leaders on the progress in implementing riparian-wetland management and restoration.
- ✧ Assist in the development of national riparian-wetland goals and objectives, and riparian-wetland performance measures for agency line officers and specialists.
- ✧ Provide input to the development of national annual program and budget guidance for BLM, FS, and NRCS.

Provide *tactical* consulting/advisory services at the request of field units to:

- ✧ Mediate disputes.
- ✧ Assist in the design, implementation and application of PFC and other riparian-wetland assessment tools.
- ✧ Assist in evaluating, trouble-shooting, and solving riparian-wetland management issues.
- ✧ Peer review scientific manuscripts/management documents plans prior to publication, upon request.
- ✧ In cooperation with NRCS and other agencies, respond to requests for technical riparian-wetland management assistance from the private sector.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION SERVICES

Participate in reviews of programs, processes, or projects that incorporate or demonstrate the use and application of PFC. Respond to national/regional/State and field office requests for review or evaluations of FS, BLM, and NRCS riparian-wetland programs.

- ✧ Promote accountability for, and recognition of, excellence in riparian-wetland management by agency employees and partners.
- ✧ Articulate and share management applications and success stories.

- ✧ Participate in program reviews, as requested.
- ✧ Work with managers, specialists, and research to identify and prioritize riparian-wetland research needs.
- ✧ Facilitate involvement of other Federal, State, and local agencies, tribes, affected industries and interested publics in review of riparian-wetland management efforts.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Riparian Network

STATE TRAINING CADRES

- ✧ Implement the community based PFC training program
- ✧ Act as first contact for inquiries regarding PFC within state
- ✧ Facilitate development of a common vocabulary through PFC training
- ✧ Provide follow-up support and quality control to trainees throughout state
- ✧ Ensure participation of internal and external interests
- ✧ Articulate and share applications and success stories
- ✧ Be a key resource to NRST for improvements to PFC documentation
- ✧ Fulfill key role in laying foundation for PFC, building trust, and generating interest and enthusiasm for PFC
- ✧ Provide source information that will link PFC to problem resolution at the local level

AGENCY RIPARIAN COORDINATORS

- ✧ Provide communication link between NRST and field
- ✧ Collaborate with training cadre coordinators on PFC training
- ✧ Facilitate the integration of PFC into program areas
- ✧ Communicate about and coordinate development of management applications of PFC
- ✧ Facilitate interdisciplinary interaction in riparian-wetland issues
- ✧ Work with NRST on increasing efficiency in existing programs and processes
- ✧ Integrate PFC into watershed and landscape assessments
- ✧ Conduct riparian-wetland service trips
- ✧ Be the key contacts for riparian-wetland teams, programs, and activities
- ✧ Provide a link to research within area
- ✧ Be a resource to NRST on a variety of riparian-wetland issues
- ✧ Orient managers to PFC

RESEARCH COMMUNITY

- ✧ Bring science and scientific rigor to riparian-wetland issues. Strengthen science behind PFC check list as necessary
- ✧ Integrate research results from a variety of sources for application to management activities
- ✧ Show linkages between processes (e.g., quantitative and qualitative, biological and physical)
- ✧ Market research needs from NRST to likely sources
- ✧ Document predicted responses to management regimes

REPRESENTATIVES OF COMMUNITY, CONSERVATION, AND INDUSTRY INTERESTS

- ✧ Participate in PFC training
- ✧ Adopt the concept of PFC
- ✧ Create the common vision
- ✧ Network and provide information tools to encourage dialogue
- ✧ Share resources to achieve common goals
- ✧ Participate in riparian-wetland restoration activities
- ✧ Encourage responsibility and commitment
- ✧ Help hold agencies accountable

WASHINGTON OFFICE/NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

- ✧ Coordinate between BLM, FS, and NRCS on implementing program for accelerating cooperative riparian management
- ✧ Provide leadership in developing coordinated, interagency riparian-wetland goals and programs that incorporate PFC as a foundation tool
- ✧ Facilitate the application of PFC assessment information in resource planning and decision making
- ✧ Develop and implement consistent interagency accomplishment reporting system and performance measures regarding riparian-wetland health
- ✧ Prepare Annual Report to Congress
- ✧ Provide policy and budget support to riparian-wetland program
- ✧ Be effective advocates and communicators for goals and activities outlined in the program of accelerating cooperative riparian management
- ✧ Encourage innovation and program flexibility

APPENDIX A: MARCH 20, 1996 LETTER

United States
Department of
Interior

Bureau of
Land
Management

WO

WO Forest
Service

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Reply Refer to: 6740 (BLM-WO330)/2520 (FS) Date: March 20, 1996

Subject: Accelerating Cooperative Riparian Restoration and Management

To: State Directors and Regional Foresters

The following approach to riparian management provides an opportunity to show that we can work together across agency and administrative boundaries to accomplish our common goal of providing for healthy, productive lands and public benefits. We recognize, and want to emphasize, the importance of riparian health to the well-being of the communities dependent on the land for multiple benefits. In July 1995, we asked for a proposal to accelerate the restoration and improved management of riparian areas in the Western United States. The proposal focused on lands managed by the USDI Bureau of Land Management and USDA Forest Service. That proposal was sent to us on September 25, 1995. On November 8, 1995, at a briefing of the Forest Service national Leadership Team, we formally announced the two agencies would move aggressively to refine and implement a cooperative management strategy.

This national riparian management effort includes the formation of a core team to act as a catalyst, focusing resources on providing training and technology transfer, consulting and advisory services, and program review. Other individuals will assist part-time with consultation and training. Another important element of the approach is the establishment of a network of riparian program coordinators throughout each agency. The approach will build on the success of existing programs and efforts, providing additional opportunity to work together more effectively.

This undertaking is important to us. It represents an opportunity to work together on one of the most significant resources charged to our care, and to involve communities connected by the "riparian zone." The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service will be a principal partner as we begin to implement riparian restoration on a watershed scale in cooperation with all landowners. It is time to "fix the creeks!" Over the next few weeks, we will be asking State Directors, Regional Foresters, Washington Office Staffs, and others to help us develop an implementation plan. This will include detail on items such as budgeting, personnel actions, reporting, and accountability.

We will work collaboratively to implement this program. This approach requires the integration of ecological, economic, social factors, and participation of affected interests. These are the elements proven effective in successful demonstration areas throughout the West.

/s/ Mike Dombeck

/s/ Jack Ward Thomas

MIKE DOMBECK
Acting Director
Bureau of Land Management

JACK WARD THOMAS
Chief
Forest Service

Enclosure

COOPERATIVE RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

March 1996

BACKGROUND

Riparian areas typically are a reflection of the overall health of the watershed and are critical to the well-being of the communities who depend on the land for jobs, clean water, food, wood products, recreation, and many other benefits. The USDI Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and USDA Forest Service (FS) have placed a high priority on caring for the health of the land. Both agencies have recognized that riparian areas present an important opportunity to demonstrate a new approach to multiple-use management because:

- riparian areas are among the first landscape features to show damage from improper management;
- they make up a small percentage of the total land area in the West but provide tremendous public benefits in the form of wildlife, grazing, recreation, wood products, fish, clean water, aquifer re-charge, and others;
- a significant portion of national forest and public land riparian areas are below their potential, and therefore their capability to provide benefits is limited; and,
- they often pass through or are shared by numerous landowners. A collaborative approach applied at the ground level is the only avenue to successful restoration and management.

These riparian areas are in need of help to restore them to their former productivity. This will not happen by regulation, changes in the law, more money, or any of the normal bureaucratic approaches. It will only occur through the integration of ecological, economic, and social factors, and participation of affected interests.

To be effective, riparian restoration and management must:

- be based on common goals, objectives, and management direction for riparian areas, and perhaps, most importantly, on common sense;
- promote establishment of a common vocabulary and definitions, and methods for evaluating the health and condition of riparian areas;
- focus effort on those opportunities where there is a high probability for positive change with a reasonable investment;
- encourage voluntary restoration of private lands; and,
- ensure management and problem resolution at the ground level, by the people most affected by success or failure.

This effort focuses the best interdisciplinary expertise and local interests, on results!

